

Case File No.: AA-79858  
EA No.: AK-040-99-015

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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EA No.: AK-040-99-015

Type of  
Action:

Mining Claim Occupancy

Location:

T. 26 N., R. 47 W., Sections 11 and 12, SM

Applicant:

Alvin Agoff  
Prince Creek Mining Co.  
P.O. Box 2791  
Palmer, Alaska 99645  
Or  
General Delivery  
Flat, Alaska 99584

Prepared By:

Carl Persson,  
Geologist

Preparing  
Office:

Bureau of Land Management  
Anchorage Field Office  
6881 Abbott Loop Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date:

March 12, 1999

## I. INTRODUCTION

On January 7, 1999, the Anchorage Field Office received an Alaska Placer Mining Application (APMA) from Mr. Alvin Agoff. Residential occupancy is listed as a necessary component of his mining operation. On October 7, 1996, Alvin Agoff filed with this office a notification of an existing occupancy on a Federal mining claim. Additionally, on August 17, 1998, an occupancy work sheet was filled out on the property during a BLM site visit.

Mr. Alvin Agoff holds 18 unpatented Federal mining claims on Prince Creek, near Flat, Alaska. The property is connected to Flat by a rough system of narrow dirt roads.

He and his family have been conducting small scale placer mining operations on Prince Creek nearly every summer for the past 50 years. The mining operation uses a D8 bulldozer, drag line, a small hydraulic giant and a 50 foot sluice box. He has filed a 3809 mining notice through the APMA process every year since 1981, (the year mining notification became a Federal requirement).

### A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

Alvin Agoff has requested an occupancy authorization for continuing use and occupancy in order to conduct ongoing gold placer mining activities on his Federal mining claims.

### B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

The proposed mining claim occupancy is within lands included in the Southwest Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), signed November 1981. One of the plan objectives (Objective M-2), states that the Bureau provide opportunities for the development of locatable minerals throughout the planning area to meet the national demands for precious and strategic mineral. The Proposed Action is in conformance with this land use plan objective.

### C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The regulations for authorizing occupancies on Federal mining claims are established in 43 CFR 3715. As established by regulation, the NEPA analysis for mining claim occupancy authorization is considered separately from the 3809 Surface Management Regulations which considers mining impacts.

## II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to continue the mining claim use and occupancy of existing structures for Alvin Agoff and his family, in order for him to conduct placer mining activities on his Federal mining claims. The occupancy site consists of approximately ½ acre of cleared and leveled land containing three well

maintained wood frame cabins. There is no proposal to build new structures on the mining claims. In order for Mr. Agoff to continue the use and occupancy of the structures on his Federal mining claim, BLM must issue an occupancy authorization. The three cabins are within Section 13, T. 26 N., R. 47 W., Seward Meridian.

Access can be achieved by landing a small aircraft on a marginal 1,000 foot airstrip located on the claims. Another option is landing an aircraft on the State maintained airstrip at Flat and driving approximately 15 miles to the property.

The proposed duration for the occupancy would be from May 1 thru October 1 annually.

B. No Action Alternative:

The only alternative is the No Action Alternative. Under this alternative the BLM would not authorize the proposed occupancy.

III. **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

A. Critical Elements:

There would be no impacts to the following critical elements: air quality, ACECs, environmental justice, farmlands (prime or unique), floodplains, Native American Religious Concerns, T & E species, wetlands/riparian zones, wild & scenic rivers, subsistence or wilderness.

B. Cultural:

The three cabins were constructed in 1940, 1941 and 1948 by Alvin Agoff's father for mining purposes. The cabins have never been formally evaluated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The cabins are located immediately adjacent to the nationally designated Willow Creek Loop Connecting Trail of the Iditarod Historic Trail. The cabins predate the trail designation.

C. Vegetation:

The vegetation consists mainly of alder, fireweed and various grasses. Most of the land adjacent to the cabins consists of tailings and settling ponds from past and present mining. The uplands to the west are composed of undisturbed birch forest except along the access road leading to Flat. Most of the surrounding drainages have been subject to placer mining in the past.

D. Wildlife:

Wildlife in the area includes moose, caribou, black and brown bears, wolves, and various birds and small mammals. Regional wildlife densities are fairly low.

E. Subsistence:

No change in Federal Subsistence Management Program authority or implementation would occur from the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action will not significantly restrict subsistence uses, decrease the abundance of subsistence resources, alter the distribution of resources, or limit subsistence user access from currently existing conditions.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

There would be impacts to water quality from the production of grey water through kitchen and household activities. Grey water is usually disposed of through pipes leading to a sump pit where it would migrate down, merge, and be quickly diluted by the local groundwater.

Minor amounts of solid household and human waste would be produced. Household waste would consist primarily of kitchen waste. Minor amounts of household hazardous waste would be generated, primarily from the use of household cleaners and solvents. Pit outhouses would be used to deal with human waste. Occasionally, new pits would have to be dug and the outhouses moved.

Brush in the immediate vicinity of the structures would be cleared and the existing structures maintained. Structures create an elevated need for wild-land fire protection for the area. The existence of structures usually results in a designation of a full suppression level of fire management in the local fire protection management plan.

The presence of food or improperly disposed garbage will occasionally attract bears. Every once in awhile a bear must be shot if it stays around and becomes a potential hazard. Some of the local miners will harvest a moose in the fall for subsistence purposes. There is approximately ½ half acre of lost habitat, principally impacting small mammals and birds, created by the occupancy. Additionally, the noise and activity associated with the occupancy will tend to cause many wildlife species to avoid the site and relocate to other areas. However, there is no shortage of similar habitat in the region for impacted species to relocate to.

There will be no impacts by the Proposed Action to the Iditarod Trail. Trail use occurs primarily during the winter when the Agoffs are not present.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action Alternative there would be no occupancy by the Agoff family on their Federal mining claim. Because of the remoteness of this location, mining is unlikely without a mining claim occupancy authorization. There is no local alternative housing or realistic opportunity to commute to the property.

Additional impacts would be that brush in the immediate vicinity of the structures would not be cleared and the existing structures would not be maintained.

C. Cumulative Impacts:

There would be negligible cumulative impacts to the local resources resulting from the occupancy.

D. Mitigation Measures:

Kitchen waste should be stored in bear proof containers or burned daily to avoid attracting bears and other animals.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. List of Preparers:

Carl Persson, Geologist (Certified Mineral Examiner #035), Lead Preparer  
Jeff Denton, Subsistence Coordinator  
Bruce Seppi, T & E Species Coordinator  
Donna Redding, Archeologist  
Dave Kelley, 3809 Surface Management Coordinator